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Message Text

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21
ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 EB-11 COME-00 SCCT-02 DRC-01 /115 W
---------- 104889
R 051859Z APR 74
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9394
INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMCONSUL BELFAST

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 04370

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, UK, EI
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH LABOR'S SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

1. IN CALL BY POLITICAL COUNSELOR ON NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY OF STATE MERLYN REES APRIL 5, LATTER WENT OVER GROUND HE HAD COVERED IN COMMONS SPEECH ON PREVIOUS DAY (SEPTEL). REES HAD JUST RETURNED FROM LUNCHEON AT NUMBER 10 DOWNING STREET HOSTED BY PRIME MINISTER WILSON FOR VISITING IRISH PRIME MINISTER COSGRAVE. MOST INTERESTING POINTS REES MADE WERE:

A) HIS EMPHASIS THAT HMG POLICY ON NORTHERN IRELAND IS A BIPARTISAN POLICY AND REQUIRES BIPARTISAN SUPPORT. LABOR WILL NOT ALLOW THIS TO CHANGE.

B) THAT ARMY HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN WELL-EMPLOYED IN NORTHERN IRELAND. HE IS DETERMINED TO TRY TO GET POLICE INTO A MORE ACTIVE ROLE IN CONTROLLING TERRORISTS AS WELL AS BORDER SECURITY, IN THE LONGER RUN. THIS WILL REQUIRE BUILDING UP THE POLICE FORCE WHICH IN TURN WILL REQUIRE MORE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR POLICE. REES NOTED THAT SUPPORT WAS UNLIKELY TO BE FORTHCOMING IF SUNNINGDALE AGREEMENT WAS NOT RATIFIED.

C) THERE COULD BE NO ILLUSION ABOUT EITHER IMPOR-
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TANCE OF DETENTION, WHICH HE FELT TO BE VERY DISTASTEFUL

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TO HIMSELF AND TO HIS PARTY, OR FACT THAT MOST OF THOSE NOW DETAINED (CATHOLICS AND PROTESTANTS) ARE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS MEN. HE FULLY EXPECTS A HIGH DEGREE OF RECIDIVISM OF THOSE DETAINEES WHO WILL BE RELEASED. MOVE TO RELEASE SOME DETAINEES, HOWEVER, AND TO ESTABLISH A COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE THE WHOLE SUBJECT OF DETENTION WAS PART OF POLITICAL PROCESS REQUIRED TO GAIN SUPPORT OF CATHOLIC COMMUNITY AND IRISH REPUBLIC FOR HMG POLICIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

D) HMG WILL FOLLOW THROUGH ON SUNNINGDALE. REES EXPECTS THAT SUFFICIENT PROGRESS WILL BE MADE ON FUGITIVE OFFENDERS AND BORDER SECURITY TO PERMIT RATIFICATION; WE HAD THE IMPRESSION HE THOUGHT THIS WOULD BE SOME TIME IN MAY.

2. COMMENT: REES IS A SHREWD POLITICIAN AND A VERY IMPRESSIVE MAN. HE IS THOROUGHLY FAMILIAR WITH ALL ASPECTS OF IRISH SITUATION AND ALL OF PLAYERS ON SCENE. HE HAS QUALITIES OF TOUGHNESS WHICH WE BELIEVE WILL ASSURE THAT NORTHERN IRELAND LOYALISTS WILL NOT BE ABLE TO INTIMIDATE HIM. IMPORTANTLY, HE ALSO SEES RISK IN BRITISH POLICY (OF POWER SHARING AND CREATION OF COUNCIL OF IRELAND). HE TOLD US THAT MOVING AHEAD ON SUNNINGDALE, AS REPUBLIC OF IRELAND AND SDLP ARE INSISTING, WAS CLEARLY RUNNING RISK OF PROTESTANT REACTION WHICH COULD BRING WHOLE EDIFICE OF BRITISH POLICY TUMBLING DOWN. NEVERTHELESS, BRITISH INTEND TO PRESS AHEAD AND HOPE THAT THEIR POLICY WILL SUCCEED. SOHM

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